

A SINGLE first half goal by Steve Perrin was enough to earn Wycombe Wanderers all three Rothmans Isthmian League points on Tuesday night against local rivals Slough Town. But despite their success, the champions were far from convincing winners.

Let's get it straight from the start. Wycombe were clearly the superior side, possessing the better individual players.

But Slough didn't stop running or working throughout the 90 minutes and successfully managed to put Wanderers out of their stride with their ceaseless harassing. It didn't make for particularly entertaining football but it was effective. This sort of competitive spirit kept Slough in the game against Sutton on Saturday until the last six minutes when they went down 1-0. Although this was their second successive reverse in Division One, they look strong enough to stay up in the senior division. Their style of play, however, is unlikely to make them many friends.

Wycombe's results so far can't be argued with. A 2-0 win on Saturday and a 1-0 success on Tuesday. These look fine on paper but so far they have not really been tested and the real crunch could well come at Sutton on Saturday.

It would be too much to expect Wanderers to rediscover their free flowing and entertaining game right at the start of the season and play it consistently. That will undoubtedly come eventually but at the moment there are one or two problems. The main trouble seems to be in midfield.

STRUGGLED

The Blues' middle trio of Howard Kennedy, Terry Reardon and Mick Holfield struggled to stamp their authority on Tuesday night's game and accordingly, service to the front runners was limited. Wycombe wanted too much time to set up their intricate attacks from midfield and Slough were not prepared to give it. The Rebels midfielders, Alan and Barrie Davies and Trevor Williams were hounding them constantly, bustling and spoiling many potential raids. Fortunately for Wycombe, the Rebels made little use of their possession.

This was mainly due to another sound performance from the defence, which looks more secure than last season. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly the form of two players — Keith Mead and Paul Birdseye — has been outstanding so far. Secondly is the arrival of Alan Phillips, who although playing below his best at the moment, rarely makes errors under pressure. On Tuesday, John Maskell in goal had only a handful of saves to make all night, despite considerable late pressure from Slough. It will take a good set of forwards to break through Wycombe's back four at present.

Due to the instability of midfield, the front runners were a little disappointing. Keith Searle had a quiet game while Perrin made the difficult things seem easy and the easy things difficult. However, Steve hit the target for the second successive game while Tony Horseman was unlucky to see first a goalpost and then a defender rob him of a goal early on.

By STUART EARP: Wycombe Wanderers 1, Slough Town 0

Birdseye's overlapping early in the first half gave Slough considerably headaches. In the fifth minute he planted a fine through ball just beyond Mick Cannon for Keith Searle to run on to, but the centre forward's angled shot hit the side netting.

Then in the 11th minute the Blues almost went ahead. Mick Holfield's long corner sailed to the far post. Horseman, despite being surrounded by three defenders, rose head and shoulders above them all to nod in a superb header only to see the ball hit the post and come down for Brendan O'Sullivan to clear off the line.

With Terry Reardon again spraying out some delightful passes, Wycombe dominated the first quarter, forcing a total of five corners. The Rebels were in considerable difficulties from these dead ball situations, but thanks to their midfield trio they began to get into the game.

Dave Kemp, a lively centre forward, gave Maskell his first test after 24 minutes with a shot on the turn which the 'keeper saved well. Kemp's effort boosted the visitors con-

siderably and with Wycombe bunching in midfield, they struggled to re-capture their early form.

Then, in the 40th minute, Wanderers took the lead. From Holfield's accurate corner, Bullock rose well to head through to Perrin who flicked the ball past Peter Spittle. Once again, it showed the value of bringing up defenders for set pieces. On Saturday it was Keith Mead who scored from a corner, on Tuesday, Bullock made the opening for the goal.

When Wanderers burst into attack, straight from the kick off in the second half, it seemed Slough could be in for a mauling. But after that first minute raid which finished with Horseman floating the ball just past the far post, the Blues failed to make any real impression in the later stages.

Once again there was too much bunching in the middle and no width to their play. Former Wanderer Geoff Anthony showed how to use the Loakes Park slope to advantage by hugging the top wing and finding plenty of space for

himself. Wycombe did not follow his example and played too much down the middle. Too often, however, they found themselves deep in their own half.

The Rebels' best move of the match came in the 69th minute. A Wycombe attack was broken by the Town defence, full back Tim Turl sending Anthony away down the flank. He slipped the ball on for Kemp who turned it inside for Turl to volley in a shot which Maskell saved well.

RAPID TACKLING

Geoff Anthony, who had such a fine game against Wycombe in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup final last term, only came into his own in the second half but in the main, he was well marked by Bullock, whose rapid tackling gave the Welshman precious little room in which to move.

There were few goalmouth incidents in the second half and much of the play was disputed in midfield. In the 74th minute, however, Perrin went close to a second goal. Once again it was Birdseye who supplied the pass. Perrin slipped the ball to Horseman who lost possession.

The ball fell kindly for Perrin, however, who drove in a shot just wide.

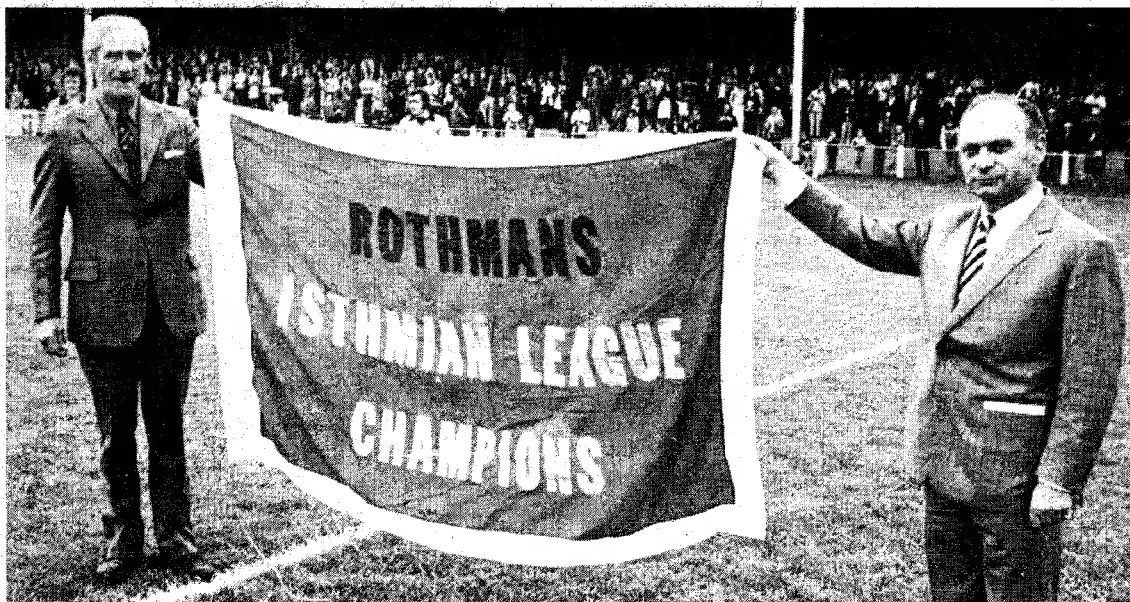
A clever free kick involving Reardon and Birdseye caused Slough some concern before they finally hacked the ball away in the 82nd minute and a minute later Spittle raced out of his goal to whip the ball off Holfield's toes as the latter pushed the ball just too far in front of him when racing through the Town penalty area.

In the last five minutes, Slough fought back well and kept Wanderers encamped in their own half. There were some anxious moments too as Anthony and Kemp threatened to steal a share of the points but thanks to Maskell, who came out well to intercept Turl's through ball for Anthony, Wycombe held out until the final whistle.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Bullock; H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holfield; A. Horseman (sub G. Mackenzie 88 mins), K. Searle, S. Perrin.

SLOUGH: P. Spittle; T. Turl, J. Beyer, M. Cannon, B. O'Sullivan; B. Davies, A. Davies, T. Williams, S. Tomkins (sub T. Brown 71 mins), D. Kemp, G. Anthony.

Referee: D. Hedges (Oxford).
Half time: 1-0. Goalscorer, Wycombe — Perrin (40).
Official paying attendance: 1,184.
Approximate total attendance: 2,200.



Chairman of the Rothmans Isthmian League, Mr. Barry East (right) and Mr. Jack Smethurst, chairman of Wycombe Wanderers, proudly showing the championship flag presented to the club before the start of Saturday's game.